

**ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE
LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location:

**County Administration North (CAN) Building
Multi-Purpose Room 101
400 W. Civic Center Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92701
[Click here](#) for parking instructions.**

Virtual Meeting Option:

Zoom Meeting Link: [Click here for meeting link](#)

Join by phone: +1 669 444 9171

Webinar ID: 923 4439 7221

****Listen-in option only****

Committee Chair: Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Individual

Committee Vice Chair: Paul Kaiser, Individual

Committee Members:

Reha Agar, Individual

Elizabeth Flores, Individual

Nichole Gideon, Individual

Deborah Kraft, Individual

Miranda Mears, Individual

Jason Mercado, Individual

Larry “Smitty” Smith, Individual

Vinny Zarrella, Individual

MINUTES

Welcome and Meeting Overview – Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Chair

Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Present: Reha Agar, Elizabeth Flores, Nichole Gideon, Paul Kaiser, Jason Mercado, Robert “Santa Bob” Morse, Larry “Smitty” Smith, and Vinny Zarrella

Absent Excused: Deborah Kraft and Miranda Mears

Public Comments – Members of the public may address the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) on items listed within this agenda or matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the LEAC. Public comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five public speakers, this time will be reduced to two minutes.

To address the LEAC during the Public Comment period, members of the public are to complete a Request to Address the Committee form prior to the beginning of each agenda item and submit it to Continuum of Care (CoC) staff. Staff will call your name in the order received.

Members of the public may also submit public comment by emailing CareCoordination@ocgov.com. All comments submitted via email at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting will be distributed to the LEAC members, and all comments will be added to the administrative records of the meeting. Please include “LEAC Meeting Comment” in the email subject line.

Public Comment:

- Alan Achterberg noted personal struggles related to Friendship Shelter, shared lived experience of homelessness and inquired about public comments missing from January 9, 2025, LEAC meeting minutes.

LEAC Member Comments – Members of the LEAC may provide comments on matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the LEAC. Comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five members wishing to speak, this time will be reduced to two minutes.

- Reha Agar reviewed the January 9, 2025, LEAC meeting minutes and identified recorded public comments received from Alan Achterberg.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approve the LEAC Meeting Minutes from January 9, 2025.

Nichole Gideon motioned to approve Consent Calendar Item 1. Elizabeth Flores seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

1. **CoC Strategic Plan** – Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, and Cameron Pastrano, CoC Staff Specialist, Office of Care Coordination

Felicia Boehringer and Cameron Pastrano presented an overview of the CoC Strategic Plan, inclusive of the timeline for planning and implementation, Strategic Aims, and potential key areas of focus for the LEAC. Discussion was facilitated relating to the key areas of focus and which Strategic Aims within the CoC Strategic Plan appeared relevant to the work of the LEAC. Felicia Boehringer and Cameron Pastrano noted the Office of Care Coordination will compile feedback and notes from the discussion, and return to the March 11, 2025, LEAC meeting, with further ideas on how the LEAC feedback connects to components of the CoC Strategic Plan. Insights will be prepared for presentation at a future CoC Board meeting as implementation planning continues.

Public Comment:

- Alan Achterberg provided feedback on the CoC Strategic Plan, suggesting a shift from traditional diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) language toward a focus on inclusion, accountability, and recognizing those seeking support rather than “handouts”. Alan Achterberg proposed developing guiding principles for LEAC and potentially the CoC, embedding core values into communication, practices, and documentation for long-term sustainability. Alan Achterberg stated draft principles could emphasize personal responsibility in healthcare, ensuring support systems remain dynamic, prioritizing respect and privacy for those receiving assistance, holding providers accountable, removing “bad actors”, favoring Motivational Interviewing over Behavioral Intervention, advocating for those taking personal responsibility, and fostering community connections to build mutual support and resilience.
- Justice shared personal experiences of homelessness and emphasized the importance of voices of people with lived experience. Justice highlighted the lack of funding for homeless prevention services, particularly for families. While housing vouchers provide stability, additional substance use disorders and mental and physical health conditions persist, often leading to eviction or overdose once an individual is housed. Justice stressed the need to also help individuals maintain healthy lives once housed. Justice expressed concern over the lack of immediate shelter options, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as mothers facing violence or human trafficking, and emphasized that many people in crisis may not have access to phones to call for help. Justice also raised issues with grievance processes within homeless services, noting a lack of follow-up and accountability, and called for a requirement that complaints be addressed within 24–48 hours. Justice introduced organization of employment as a resource, which focuses on treatment, prevention, and ensuring people are placed in safe environments.

Committee Discussion:

- Elizabeth Flores emphasized advocacy as a key reason for joining the committee. Elizabeth Flores shared concerns about housing inequities, including landlords making efforts to displace tenants in order to charge higher rent. Elizabeth Flores expressed fear that federal funding freezes could impact equity-related initiatives. Finally, Elizabeth Flores highlighted the importance of advocacy, population focus, and partnership building.
- Nichole Gideon emphasized the importance of being involved in all strategic aims while prioritizing certain areas. Nichole Gideon appreciated the clarity of the graph but questioned if it allowed flexibility between Strategic Aims 1 and 2. Nichole Gideon highlighted the significance of lived experience, particularly in Strategic Aim 4, and stressed the need for training, policy focus, and system optimization. Nichole Gideon advocated for a shift from a reactive to a proactive approach, with improved tracking of funding allocations and key focus areas. Nichole Gideon supported collaboration with public housing authorities and non-CoC resources, such as affordable housing and landlords. Nichole Gideon also appreciated the inclusion of transportation accessibility in housing development plans. Additionally, Nichole Gideon emphasized the need for clearer grievance processes, anonymity protections, and advocacy efforts. Recognizing the gap between committee members and service providers, Nichole Gideon called for a more direct and transparent system for addressing concerns beyond referring individuals to 211 or providing an email address.
- Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse emphasized the importance of each member contributing their expertise and getting involved in various committees. Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse noted that “prevention” was not included on the Areas of Focus graphic. Chair Robert “Santa Bob” Morse encouraged members to join upcoming CoC board meetings virtually, via Zoom.

- Vinny Zarrella acknowledged challenges in engaging with committees due to leadership concerns. Vinny Zarrella agreed with concerns about housing and grievance processes, noting a lack of anonymity and potential data manipulation. Vinny Zarrella advocated for third-party auditing of grievances to ensure transparency and accountability. Vinny Zarrella shared personal experiences of struggling to help vulnerable individuals due to gaps in coordinated entry and lack of immediate shelter options.
- Vice Chair Paul Kaiser highlighted concerns about sustainability once individuals are housed, warning about long-term issues with recidivism. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser discussed policy and advocacy challenges within the CoC's scope, particularly regarding housing authority regulations and misinterpretations of government codes. Vice Chair Paul Kaiser emphasized the need for CoC advocacy at the federal level to address systemic barriers in homelessness services.
- Reha Agar raised concerns about confidentiality, compliance, and system optimization. Reha Agar stressed the need for trauma-informed case management and strict adherence to client confidentiality. Reha Agar identified ongoing landlord compliance issues within rental assistance programs and the need for free legal aid to prevent voucher loss due to landlord actions. Reha Agar suggested a separate entity to address housing loopholes and improve program oversight.
- Larry "Smitty" Smith asked about the decision-making process behind the CoC board's areas of focus. Larry "Smitty" Smith asked whether existing policies would be adjusted or if a new system would be built from scratch. Larry "Smitty" Smith highlighted the need for clearer messaging and practical implementation of strategic aims. Larry "Smitty" Smith criticized the lack of progress in equity initiatives, noting historical failures in DEI efforts. Larry "Smitty" Smith suggested setting equity discussions aside until a viable framework can be established.
- Jason Mercado shared frustration over being unable to provide direct assistance to people who reach out with a need for resources, despite serving on the LEAC. Jason Mercado highlighted the disconnect between committee roles and real-time support for those in crisis.

2. CoC Board Updates – Nichole Gideon, CoC Board Secretary

Nichole Gideon shared updates from the January 22, 2025, CoC Board meeting.

- The CoC Board approved recommendations for programming of Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program funding allocated to the CoC .
- Results of the CoC Board Officer elections and appointments CoC Committee Chairs and the Policies, Procedures and Standards (PPS) Committee at-large member.
- The CoC Board approved the revised Coordinated Entry System (CES) Pre-Assessment Screening and CES Survivor Assessment tools
- The CoC Strategic Plan is being shared across various CoC Committees to gather more feedback and support, allowing for further development.

Nichole Gideon also noted that the Orange County CoC is still awaiting further information on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 CoC Program funding award.

Public Comment:

- Alan Achterberg encouraged inviting CoC Board members to meetings and increasing interaction with the LEAC. Alan Achterberg encouraged LEAC members to use their influence for advocacy in decision-making processes. Alan Achterberg shared personal experience of sharing information and training resources with a housing coordinator. Alan Achterberg emphasized the need for greater awareness of available training opportunities and the importance of trauma-informed

care. Alan Achterberg noted that both recipients and providers of care can exhibit reactive responses to trauma and advocated for access to education and community-building efforts to address these challenges.

3. CoC Updates – Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, Office of Care Coordination

Felicia Boehringer provided an update regarding travel compensation for LEAC members as well as updates on upcoming meetings of the CoC Board and CoC Committees. Felicia Boehringer shared that the CoC staff is staying informed about developments in federal legislation and providing updated information would be most helpful to share. Felicia Boehringer expressed appreciation for everyone’s continued dedication and participation in this work.

Public Comment:

- Alan Achterberg shared that there will be an update to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) next year, and it will be important to participate in the process.

Committee Discussion:

- Elizabeth Flores expressed concern with managing public comments during meetings and noted feeling more hesitant to share openly in the public meeting space. Elizabeth Flores expressed wanting to explore other ways of communicating ideas and lived experience as it relates to the LEAC agenda items.
- Vice Chair Paul Kaiser suggested that members could request to add agenda items anonymously for future LEAC meetings, ensuring topics are still addressed without having to publicly disclose personal experiences.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at the County Administrative North (CAN) Building Multi-Purpose Room 101, 400 W. Civic Center Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92701